

# A Story of Compassion

## USDA Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

### Joycliff Community Lifelong Resource Center

Macon, Georgia

According to Reverend Beverly Flowers, pastor of Joycliff Methodist Church and sponsor for the Summer Program at JCLRC, “Over 70 percent of the kids we serve are in the at-risk category.” She explained that their families have been so enriched by being able to have their children participate in the SFSP and learn new activities during summer when school is out.



Ms. Rena Slaton is a volunteer parent who came to the summer camp each week to provide a puppet show for the children. “My daughter Elaine attends Mattie Wells Primary School in Jones County and she enjoyed coming to ‘JCLRC’s Summer Camp and Feeding Program’ every day,” said Slaton.

“She met friends there and learned to try foods she hadn’t eaten before because the meals were prepared so tastefully,” said Slaton. “The staff was very helpful and wonderful. I look forward to Elaine returning again next summer!” Ms. Slaton holds a puppet show for children at the JCLRC’s Summer Camp.

“Kids need things to do during the summer when school is out. They need a nutritious lunch with activities to make them learn and grow,” said Reverend Flowers.

Their efforts are a wonderful example of how creativity, innovativeness, and dedication can create a happier and healthier environment for the children. JCLRC utilized the resources of their surrounding community to involve everyone in achieving their mission.

At the Jones Elementary School in Macon, 71.46 percent of the students receive free and reduced price meals. According to Joycliff United Methodist Church’s 2000 Precept Study . . . “of those who reside within a two–five mile radius of the JCLRC, 27 percent of families live below poverty.

Joycliff wanted to reach the children in its community in many ways. They felt it was important to ensure that the children in their neighborhoods had access to nutritious meals through the SFSP during the summer when school was not in session. They also wanted to provide constructive activities and academic assistance for their children.

“Incorporating other activities into the SFSP helped to increase participation in the meals program because the children were actually having fun and telling other children about the activities and the free meals,” explained Reverend Flowers.

### How the Initiative is Helping

Joycliff Community Lifelong Resource Center, Inc. (JCLRC) began serving



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summer meals to the children in the Macon area in 2001. They were able to become a successful faith-based SFSP sponsor after hearing about USDA's Faith-based and Community Initiative at state agency training in February and has truly been able to reach the community in a very positive way.

Coinciding with this organization's efforts, the Southeast Regional Office of the USDA Food and Nutrition Service was actively working with Bright from the Start:

Georgia's Department of Early Care and Learning, the agency that administers the SFSP in the state, to increase participation in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) to include more faith-based and community sponsors.

According to Ms. Romain, State Agency Director Jackie Romain of the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, "This faith-based organization has operated a very successful Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and we have recommended them for the Summer Sunshine Awards presented by the FNS Southeast Regional Office."

### About the Organization

"JCLRC is committed and dedicated to preserving the family by enhancing the quality of life for our children and youth, that they may become productive citizens for our future," Flowers emphasized. They are a shining example of how faith-based organizations can provide service to their community and reach people outside their church congregation!

In 2001, Joycliff United Methodist Church created JCLC, Inc. with the goal of serving all children regardless of race, creed, gender, religious affiliations, or national origin. They base their desire to help others on the scripture, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in." Matthew 25:35

"It is our mission to improve children, youth and adult educational skills, to expand cultural and recreational enrichment activities, and to increase the family economic capacity," said Reverend Beverly Flowers. "Our children are our future, by investing in our children we are preserving the future.

The organization brought in additional churches and community organizations as sites under their summer program in 2004. Hearing about USDA's Faith-Based and Community Initiative assured many of these pastors and other faith-based and community leaders that they could become successful as a church entity serving meals to children through USDA's Summer Food Service Program.

### Vitals

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